

OLC 72-0325

13 March 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: White House Meeting of the Legislative Interdepartmental
Group - 10 March 1972

On 10 March 1972, I attended a meeting of the LIG at 1600 hours in the Cabinet Room of the White House. The meeting was chaired by General Al Haig and participants included:

National Security Council

Colonel Richard Kennedy
Mr. John Lehman
Mr. Helmut (Hal) Sonnenfeldt
Mr. James T. Hackett

White House

Mr. Thomas Korologos
Mr. Richard Cook
Mr. John Russell Deane

Office of Management and Budget

Mr. William Gifford

Department of State

Mr. David Abshire
Mr. Charles Brower

Department of Defense

Mr. Rady Johnson
Lt. Gen. George Seignious

USIA

Mr. Eugene Kopp

DOS, NSC and OSD Reviews Completed

The following items were discussed:

1. Foreign Assistance Bill

It was agreed that State and Defense would approach Senator Stennis to try to persuade him to lead the fight for the Administration's foreign military assistance programs. Particular concern was expressed regarding the programs for Korea and Turkey. A Presidential decision will be sought on whether to go for a supplemental appropriation or try to get the present ceiling lifted.

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2.

We were all asked if we had any ideas for coping with the present impasse. I put into the hopper a note containing a suggestion by for funding under the supplemental appropriation bill. Haig passed this to Lehman with a request that he check it out.

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On the question of Fulbright's request for all CIA studies dealing with the Radios, I explained we had no objection to providing him, through State, with copies of our latest study on the cost of termination but didn't think we could comply with his shotgun request for all CIA studies dealing with the Radios over the last several years. No one questioned this position.

3. War Powers

It was agreed that there was little chance of beating back the Javits bill restricting the President's war powers in the Senate, since neither Scott, Hruska, nor Allott were willing to get involved. It was noted that so far the Administration has only about 30 votes in the Senate, and hence would have to rely on support in the House if the bill was to be blocked.

In the course of this discussion it was noted that the Administration did not plan to oppose the Horton bill to set up a joint committee to handle certain national security matters (including military action ordered by the President).

4. Case Bill on Executive Agreements

Abshire, of State, will take up with Chairman Morgan, of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the LIG proposal from the last meeting which would require that all classified agreements with foreign governments would be cleared with the White House before being made available to Congress.

5. Disclosure Policies

It was noted that the President has thus far invoked executive privilege in refusing congressional access to planning projections studies by executive agencies. The question now arises in the light of requests by Chairman Fulbright in the Senate and Moorhead in the House for planning papers and projections prepared in the field by USIA and AID. These Agencies are recommending that executive privilege be invoked pointing out that the papers in question are too candid, too informal, and too tentative. State is supporting this position.

It was noted that Fulbright has asked USIA for copies of all NSC studies in which USIA has participated, and that this matter would be handled separately from the question of USIA and AID planning papers.

Haig noted that in some cases we've been able to avoid a showdown with Fulbright by neither invoking executive privilege nor complying with his request but simply letting matters drag on indefinitely. I cited our own situation regarding Fulbright's request for national estimates dealing with Southeast Asia, which had been dragging on several months without anybody getting too upset.

6. Manpower Ceiling/Mansfield Proposal/NATO

Haig made clear that the President wanted no one to get involved in any discussion on the Hill about possible cuts in our NATO forces or across-the-board manpower cuts. All agencies should, where appropriate, argue against any cuts. State has circulated a paper providing argumentation on this issue.

Abshire recommended that since Stennis had apparently been asking questions on this subject, it would be well if the President could invite him down to the White House for a visit.

Cook expressed concern over the staff situation in the House Armed Services Committee with Blandford going back to the hospital for another operation, Slatinshek overworked, and important staff functions being taken on by inexperienced juniors.

7. I G A Reports

Defense was sharply critical of State IG report regarding military advisors in Cambodia, on the ground that they imply a violation of the Cooper-Church amendment. State defended the report and argued that in any event attempts to alter it might backfire, since the author had good political connections.

8. Laos Ceiling

Johnson said we'd have to ration expenditures and he thought we might start with contract air operations. Gifford wondered whether Continental Air and Air America couldn't postpone billing for the remainder of FY 1972 until after 1 July. I objected, arguing that we'd certainly get caught up on this with serious damage to our credibility. I said people who have been out there lately thought maybe the place to start cutting back, if at all, might be in ammunition provided FAR/FAN, but I wondered whether we shouldn't examine the proposal of upping the ceiling. Abshire said if so, we should approach Stennis soonest, let him know the situation and get his views about the feasibility of going for an increased ceiling. I said I thought we shouldn't be bashful about this since it was cleared that the enemy had escalated the fighting, the media have at last recognized that it is a real and bloody war going on there, and even the Moose and Lowenstein report gives our present effort fair marks. Abshire agreed and Haig said we should:

a. Avoid resort to "hanky-panky" to get around the ceiling,

b. Check with the Hill on attitudes toward an increased ceiling, and

c. "Scrub down" the cost figures to try to find out exactly where we stand.


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